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1.) Navy to expand spots for sailors to take 3 years off / 01 JUNE 15

NAVY TIMES, Meghann Myers

It's a common refrain among sailors contemplating leaving the Navy: They're burned out, they don't have time to finish college, they want to raise a family.

But the Navy doesn't want to lose their talent and now plans to expand the number of slots for those who want to take up to three years off.

The Career Intermission Program offers sailors a small portion of their base pay every month for up to 36 months. They can then return seamlessly to duty with no consequences for promotions.

The program started small, with 20 billets each for officers and enlisted, but a new proposal on Capitol Hill would expand the program by 10 times.

Now in its seventh year, 82 sailors have been accepted to CIP so far. The program has grown from one male officer and two enlisted men in 2009 to 13 participants in 2015, 10 of whom are enlisted and 85 percent women. But that's still only about a third of the available billets.

Now, the Navy is asking Congress to increase the billets to 400, widen eligibility and make participation more flexible and, in some cases, better paid.

If approved, there will be a new menu of options, for example, letting participants, take a shorter break with more pay in return for a longer service obligation after they return.

Currently, sailors receive 1/15 of their base pay — roughly \$100 after taxes on an E-5's salary — and owe twice as much time as they took off once they return, in addition to whatever was left on their enlistment or contract. So that would be a minimum of six additional years for a sailor who spent three years off duty.

There are now some eligibility disqualifiers that the Navy is trying to dump.

Going forward, sailors earning critical skills retention bonuses or selective re-enlistment bonuses would be eligible for the program, though they wouldn't earn the extra money during their time off. That means more than 24,000 SRB sailors and 2,550 CSRB sailors could apply.

And the program would also open up to those in their first enlistment, which would help solve the problem the service has retaining sailors after their initial obligation because participation would require a mandatory extension.

Similarly, officers still serving their minimum service requirement, typically three to five years, would be eligible, as would those receiving retention bonuses.

Plan ahead

Want time off to raise a family, finish school or care for a sick relative? Need to stagger sea tours for dual military spouses or to launch that Mount Kilimanjaro expedition? CIP might be your ticket.

Among enlisted members, one of the most popular reasons for taking time off is to earn an undergraduate degree.

Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class (SW/AW) Amara Timberlake, 25, joined the Navy in 2007 with the specific goal of using tuition assistance to get a degree.

But after a demanding tour aboard the aircraft carrier Nimitz and another high op tempo duty station, Defense Media Activity at Fort Meade, Maryland, she was feeling burned out and not much closer to graduation, she said.

"I was at a point where I was kind of fantasizing about taking a break from the Navy," she told Navy Times in an April 14 phone interview. "If I could just have two more years to finish my degree, or two years at a shore command where I could really study — that was my ideal."

Now she's in school, and planning to apply for Officer Candidate School when she returns to become a public affairs officer, she said.

The break is welcome, she said, but she wasn't expecting how tough it would be to leave the military.

"It's hard to expect people [in class] to be on top of their work, be organized," she said. "I think I really, really took that for granted when I was in the Navy. I'm really looking forward to getting back to that."

Then there's the absence of her salary and the hefty Washington, D.C.-area basic allowance for housing.

She made a plan to use her GI Bill benefits at Broward College in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, and then transfer to Florida Atlantic University to study communications.

She's been in Florida since December and she's making it work, she said, but the financial burden is tough.

Her wife is trying to sell their house in Baltimore while she pays the rent on a place in Florida, but work-study is offsetting some of her school expenses.

"I thought I was financially prepared, and I really wasn't," she said.

Yeoman 1st Class Tamoris Gordon used CIP to finish

Yeoman 1st Class Tamoris Gordon used CIP to finish his criminology degree and found he had so much extra time that he got a part-time job to help cover the bills. Officials are considering paying larger stipends for those in the COP program. (Photo: Courtesy Tamoris Gordon)

Missing the Navy

The financial hurdles are a common concern for CIP participants, so the re-vamped program's bigger stipend would be a welcome change.

Yeoman 1st Class (SW) Tamoris Gordon, 27, sat down with his chief at the Office of the Chief of Naval Personnel to lay out a financial plan before starting the program last year.

He had started going to school part-time at George Mason University, down the road in northern Virginia, but he decided to take a year off to focus on school full-time and finish his criminology degree.

He joined the Navy right out of high school in 2006, he said, and "all I knew was work."

But with hopes to earn his commission and become an intelligence officer, he decided a break was the right plan, though it was jarring at first to be out in the civilian world. That, and the money, are why he worked check-out at PetSmart on the side.

"It was actually kind of weird, to be honest," Gordon said. "At first I was actually completely bored out of my mind, hence why I got a part-time job."

But the time off has reinforced his commitment to a Navy career, which is CIP's main goal — giving those who want to remain in uniform some time off so they return with undivided focus.

"To be honest, being outside the Navy, it makes you kind of think about how important the Navy is and how much stability you have when you're in the Navy," he said.

For newly commissioned Ensign Manaia Alaimalo, CIP had a couple extra perks: Three years in which he was able to live in his own house and put his kids to bed every night.

Alaimalo, 32, was a Fleet Marine Force hospital corpsman 1st class when he started his career intermission in 2011.

He had two deployments to Iraq with the 1st Marine Division out of Camp Pendleton, California, when he was working at his command's career counseling office, watching other troops transition out of the military without a back-up plan.

"I would ask them, 'What are you going to do afterward?' and they would say, 'Oh, I'm networking,' " Alaimalo recalled. "That's when I knew for sure I did not want to exit the military like that."

So he decided to take his combat medicine experience and parlay it into a nursing degree and a commission, opting for Grand Canyon University near a house he owns outside Phoenix.

He funded school with his GI Bill, like Gordon and Timberlake, and supplemented it with student loans while his wife worked extra shifts.

"We planned for it, but it was much more intense than what we planned for," he said.

Now he's assigned to the post-anesthesia care unit at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland, fulfilling a goal to become a health care professional, which he'd had since before he enlisted in 2000.

"I joined when I was young. I had just turned 17, pretty much your typical story," he said. "You start to grow as a person, and a man, and you start to see what the Navy really has to offer."

All three participants said they were eager to restart their Navy careers, and that a solid financial plan is a must for anyone contemplating CIP.

There's also the matter of getting benefits while technically separated. Outside of a fleet or military concentration area, where you can get Tricare, it can be harder to get health care.

Timberlake suggested the updated instruction include more guidance for sailors on how to navigate their military status during CIP, because participants receive a discharge paper DD-214 and are part of the Individual Ready Reserve.

And a pay bump would be much appreciated.

"I think that financially, if they offered more — like half your base pay — I think that would really help," she said.

A new compensation scheme hasn't been settled on, a Navy official confirmed, but the details will be announced if the proposal passes with the 2016 National Defense Authorization Act.

2.) The new eval and fitrep rules: What you need to know / 31 MAY 15

NAVY TIMES, Mark D. Faram

Nothing has more impact on sailors' careers than their evaluations. Good marks and they move up, bad marks and they go home.

Navy officials are tweaking the rules for how the evaluation (enlisted) and fitness report (officer) system works, and everyone will now be graded for fostering a healthy command climate and fighting sexual assault. Skippers and admirals will also be accountable for the conduct and climate of their organization.

What you need to know:

1. Surveys and skippers. The fitness reports have new standards by which commanding officers will be evaluated, such as command climate surveys. COs are required to conduct one within two months of taking charge, and then at the one year mark and each year after that — and they'll be knocked if they don't get them done.

"Failure to conduct required command assessments is considered a leadership deficiency for grading purposes," said the new instruction, dated May 1.

The new rules also grade them on classified material handling and their sailors' security clearances.

2. Healthy command climate. Everyone from the lowest E-1 to the top admiral will now be graded on helping to foster healthy command climates and fighting sexual harassment.

"For commanding officers, indicate the extent to which they have or have not established a command climate where allegations of sexual assault are properly managed and fairly evaluated," the instruction says.

It also calls for marks on whether victims of any criminal activities feel they "can report the criminal activity without fear of retaliation, including ostracism and group pressure."

To get high marks in military bearing, even the most junior sailors must "demonstrate how they have cultivated or maintained command climates where improper discrimination of any kind, sexual harassment, sexual assault, hazing and other inappropriate conduct is not tolerated."

3. New rules for admirals. It's lonely at the top. Admirals are going to start being evaluated for the attitudes they foster at their commands, including integrity, accepting responsibility for subordinates' actions and "undertaking necessary action," though the instruction doesn't give examples of this.

4. The same language. Because more reservists are pulling duty, from drills to orders that can cover years, it's important that reserves and active-duty speak the same language in evaluations and fitness reports. Reservists on any type of active-duty must now receive concurrent reports from the active duty command with which they're serving. .

5. Be honest. The evaluation system depends on evaluators, from work center supervisors to COs, accurately depicting their subordinate's performance.

"If you don't think someone is measuring up, you need to be brutally honest and upfront with those people, because one poor evaluation is not going to make or break someone's career," said Chief of Naval Personnel Vice Adm. Bill Moran.

"It's only with a pattern of less than adequate performance that they shouldn't be advanced or promoted in the Navy. But the only way you're going [to document poor performance] is by commands and command triads being a bit more upfront with how they write those — truly calling it how they see it."

3.) New FY-15 GMT Guidance Effective June 1/ 04 JUNE 15 [\[LINK\]](#)

From Naval Education and Training Command Public Affairs

PENSACOLA, Fla. (NNS) -- The Naval Education and Training Command (NETC) announced that effective June 1, FY15 requirements for several General Military Training (GMT) training lessons are no longer mandatory for completion via Navy Knowledge Online (NKO) and Navy e-Learning, and may be delivered through alternate methods.

According to Rear Adm. Mike White, NETC commander, based on fleet feedback and in line with the GMT initiative from the Secretary of the Navy, command triads are encouraged to evaluate their GMT needs and use appropriate methods to provide this training.

"We are empowering the command triads to choose the type of training relevant for their Sailors," said White. "They know their Sailors best and understand what training is needed to positively impact their lives, and to support their command mission."

GMT lessons which were waived for FY 15 and were covered by the Bystander Intervention to the Fleet (BI2F) training include physical readiness, sexual health, fraternization, and hazing.

While no longer mandatory, the information in several topics is important for Sailors and command leaders may decide that the training could be delivered in alternate methods, such as partnering with local Fleet and Family Service Centers. To support these needs, the online sessions will remain available for domestic violence, stress management, and operational risk management.

There are certain legal, congressional and DoD required training topics that still must be completed annually, and are available via Navy eLearning and NKO. These include Privacy and PII awareness, records management, and antiterrorism/force protection, to name a few. A complete list is available on the GMT page on NKO.

In addition, there are a few lessons that are mandatory for face-to-face delivery. These include Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) and suicide prevention, among others.

According to Bill Marvel, NETC GMT program manager, NKO remains a valuable resource for GMT lesson delivery.

"Although several of the lessons are no longer required to be completed using NKO or Navy eLearning, they'll continue to be an available option for commands as the information in this training remains relevant in a number of critical areas that impact individual Sailors and the overall health of our force," said Marvel.

Marvel added that the list now posted to NKO supersedes the requirements contained in the FY-15 General Military Training Schedule (NAVADMIN 202/14), and the plan for FY16 training will be communicated via a NAVADMIN message later this summer.

For more information on the Naval Education and Training Command, visit the NETC website:
<https://www.netc.navy.mil>.

For more news from Naval Education and Training Command, visit www.navy.mil/local/cnet/.

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As a veteran, whether you did one tour or retired after a lengthy career, you may have earned medical benefits that the VA administers. Between the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the service branches, there has been an ongoing effort to improve medical service delivery to veterans.

We are doing what we can to make your Service Treatment Records available to the VA by uploading them into the healthcare system so that the VA will be able to provide care in a timely manner, but we need your help. We must have the original record for uploading.

Veterans, if you still have your health records, make a copy and then return the originals to the VA or a Military Treatment Facility.

Sailors who are getting ready to leave the Navy – you need to make sure your medical records are turned in to the proper medical treatment facility; they will provide you a copy. If you need some kind of treatment down the line for a service-related injury, the VA will have to verify your service. When your records are in place, they will have immediate access to your records and can get you the care you need.

Navy Medicine is the organization responsible for uploading Sailors' Service Treatment Records into a system called the Healthcare Artifact and Image Management Solution.

Their goal is to have the records uploaded within 45 business days of receipt, and they are currently at 72 percent compliance with this goal. They have brought the average number of days to upload records down from 97 to 46 for active duty and 57 for Reserve. There are more initiatives underway to provide continual improvement as Navy Medicine and our Pay and Personnel Department coordinate Service Treatment Records education and reporting.

Commanding officers and officers-in-charge, you also share in the responsibility to ensure Service Treatment Records are returned to the proper medical treatment facility. Command separation check-out sheets should include sections to account for returned medical and dental records.

Make sure you have access to what you've earned, get your medical records turned in and ensure your medical treatment facilities know you are separating or retiring.

You can find out more about the disposition of Service Treatment Records by reading NAVADMIN 187/14 at www.npc.navy.mil.

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